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Protracted conflicts in the GUAM area and their implications for international peace, security and development

The situation in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan

Elimination of racism and racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance

Responsibility of States for internationally wrongful acts

The rule of law at the national and international levels

The scope and application of the principle of universal jurisdiction

Letter dated 22 August 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Azerbaijan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I would like to draw your attention to the letter dated 7 August 2014 from the Permanent Representative of Armenia (A/68/968-S/2013/577) and his statements made at an open debate of the Security Council on the topic of conflict prevention on 21 August 2014. In reality, the aforementioned letter and statements are yet other attempts by Armenia to deny the facts that point to its policy of aggression, hostility and hatred towards Azerbaijan. Below are some of those facts that totally disprove the allegations of the Permanent Representative of Armenia.

Armenia often welcomes the efforts of the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. The aforementioned letter from the Permanent Representative of Armenia and his statements are no exception. However, apart from being done on a selective basis, merely welcoming those efforts is not sufficient for achieving progress in the conflict settlement process, especially when the commitments and deeds of Armenia have always been at odds with that goal.

Armenia tries to assure the United Nations community of its support for an early and lasting settlement of the conflict and to the principles of international law, in particular those reflected in the relevant statements by the Co-Chairs of the Minsk Group. In reality, Armenia has grossly violated those and other principles of

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international law by seizing and continuing to occupy and control the Daghlyq Qarabagh (Nagorno-Karabakh) region and other areas of Azerbaijan. That Armenia is responsible for aggression against Azerbaijan and for the resulting situation is beyond any doubt.

In contrast to Armenia's interpretation of international legal norms and principles, the primary objective of these norms and principles in the context of the ongoing conflict settlement process is, first and foremost, to ensure that the occupied territories of Azerbaijan are liberated, that people who have been forcibly displaced return to their homes and that Armenia and Azerbaijan establish relations on the basis of respect for each other's sovereignty and territorial integrity. Armenia rejects that understanding, thus preventing the achievement of a negotiated settlement of the conflict and continuing to violate international law and destabilize the situation.

It is no coincidence that the Permanent Representative of Armenia did not refer in his aforementioned letter and statements to Security Council resolutions 822 (1993), 853 (1993), 874 (1993) and 884 (1993), which are the most authoritative decisions on the problem. The reason for such absent-mindedness is obvious. In those resolutions, the Council reaffirmed both the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Azerbaijan and the inadmissibility of the use of force for the acquisition of territory. It further stated that the Daghlyq Qarabagh (Nagorno-Karabakh) region is part of Azerbaijan and demanded the immediate, complete and unconditional withdrawal of occupying forces from all the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. The numerous documents adopted by other international organizations on the conflict contain wording along the same lines. In other words, Armenia omits mentioning the resolutions of the Council and the documents of other international organizations simply because its assessment of Armenian actions against Azerbaijan is diametrically opposite to what the official Erivan asserts.

The Armenian side's forgetfulness also extends to its frequent references to confidence-building measures. Evidently, Armenia's perception of such measures is limited to the withdrawal of snipers and the investigation of ceasefire incidents only. Otherwise, the Permanent Representative of Armenia would recall that his Government deliberately denies the right of almost 1 million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes and undertakes efforts to alter the demographic structure of the occupied territories and remove any signs of Azerbaijani cultural and historical roots of those territories. Armenia's speculations on confidence-building are also curious insofar as Armenia persistently opposes direct contact between the Azerbaijani and Armenian communities of the Daghlyq Qarabagh (Nagorno-Karabakh) region of Azerbaijan.

Likewise, the undisguised promotion by the leadership of Armenia of the odious ideas of ethnic and religious incompatibility with Azerbaijanis can hardly contribute to building confidence. The recent warmongering statement by President Serzh Sargsyan of Armenia is yet another solid piece of evidence testifying to the consistency of the official Erivan policy of aggression, hatred and racial animosity. Thus, in his recent interview, Serzh Sargsyan threatened to unleash short-range ballistic missiles against major cities in Azerbaijan, including the capital Baku, thus turning them, with their millions of residents, into ruins. The following words belonging to the President of Armenia require no further comment:

> The Azerbaijani leadership knows very well what resources the Armenian armed forces have in stock. They are very well aware that we have ballistic missiles with an effective range of over 300 km, and that they are capable of turning into ruins any flourishing settlement in a glimpse, like the ruins of Aghdam.[1]

Such revelations by the head of the Armenian State are not surprising. The direct involvement of the current political and military leadership of Armenia, including its incumbent and former Presidents, in brutal massacres during the conflict, which claimed the lives of thousands of Azerbaijani civilians, including children, women and the elderly, is well known and thoroughly documented (for more information, see A/67/753-S/2013/106). Evidence of a special relationship in Armenia with terrorists and war criminals can also be seen in their glorification at the State level, including by raising them to the status of national heroes and bestowing State decorations on them.

Allegations of the "dissemination of hatred towards Armenia and the Armenian people" are also beneath all criticism. Suffice it to mention that, unlike Armenia, which has implemented a policy of total ethnic cleansing of both its own territory and the occupied territories of Azerbaijan of all non-Armenians and thus succeeded in creating a uniquely monoethnic culture in those areas, Azerbaijan has preserved its ethnic and cultural diversity to the present day.

Besides, in apparent disregard of its obligations under international law and of its respective commitments under the existing arms control regime, Armenia continues to build up its military presence in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan. Comparative analyses show that, in relation to its population, territory, annual budget and gross domestic product, Armenia is the most militarized country in the South Caucasus.

As we have stated on a number of occasions, regular ceasefire violations and deliberate attacks by the armed forces of Armenia against Azerbaijani civilians and civilian objects have become more frequent and violent in recent times, resulting in the killing and wounding of many inhabitants residing near the front line. On 3 August 2014, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan stated the following:

> During the last several days, having violated the ceasefire regime in various directions along the Armenia-Azerbaijan border and the line of contact, the armed forces of the Republic of Armenia, the Occupying Power, have made several incursions into the positions of the armed forces of the Republic of Azerbaijan. The reconnaissance and subversive groups of the armed forces of Armenia have made several attempts to cross the line of contact. These provocative actions by the Armenian side caused significant escalation along the frontline and resulted in numerous human losses. The official Yerevan, which ordered these provocative actions, bears full responsibility for aggravating the dangerous situation. (For the full text of the statement, see A/68/962-S/2014/566, annex.)

The conclusion is self-evident. In reality, by disregarding the resolutions of the Security Council and the decisions of other international organizations, by

[1] Interview given to ArmNews TV on 11 August 2014. Available from the President of Armenia's official website: www.president.am/en/interviews-and-press-conferences/item/2014/08/11/President-Serzh-Sargsyan-interview-Armnews-Sochi.

continuing to illegally occupy the territories of Azerbaijan, by deliberately denying the right of 1 million Azerbaijani refugees and internally displaced persons to return to their homes, and by misinterpreting the norms and principles of international law, Armenia clearly demonstrates who is actually destabilizing the situation and undermining peace in the region.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 34, 38, 67, 77, 85 and 86, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Yashar **Aliyev**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative